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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ, IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, CLIMATE, UN,
GERMANY

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¶1. Lead Stories Summary

Primetime newscast and most newspapers opened with stories on the new coalition government, highlighting that the CDU and CSU congresses overwhelmingly supported the coalition agreement with the FDP. Frankfurter Allgemeine led with a story on the political changeover in Baden-Wrttemberg. Editorials focused on the new coalition government.

¶2. (Iraq) New Violence

Under the headline "Bagdad Blues," Sddeutsche (10/27) commented on

the increasing violence in Iraq underscoring that "Prime Minister Maliki is also to blame for the chaos..., not the Syrian state leader....

Maliki's soldiers have once more demonstrated that they cannot do their jobs.... With new violence spreading through the country, there

will hardly be enough U.S. soldiers ready to stand by the Iraqis. The

withdrawal of large units has been prepared over months and cannot be

reversed in days. Anyways, Washington needs fresh troops for Afghanistan. The withdrawal from Iraq will soon be an irreversible

process, regardless of the situation in the country. The leaders of rebel groups from al Qaida to the Sunni Baathists realize this. Many of them are standing back, knowing that the U.S. army will not stay in the country forever and that the battle for power can then be fought by the Iraqis themselves. Because Baghdad has disappointed the Sunni militia groups by not accepting them into the army, many of them may return to underground militias. The situation in Iraq has been euphemized in recent months.... The Iraqi prime minister and the U.S. President must ask themselves why they are risking the security achieved by the U.S. army in 2007: Maliki by promising security without being able to guarantee it and Obama by forcing himself into such a strict timetable that he loses any political and military latitude."

Frankfurter Rundschau (10/27) and Tagesspiegel (10/27) editorialized:
"The earth is shaking in Baghdad.... Three central government institutions have been ruined in the last two months, more than 250 people have died and thousands have been injured. Given this inferno

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of death and destruction, doubts are rightly increasing in the United States, European capitals and NATO. The devastating suicide attacks could break the back of the young post-Saddam republic before it has learned to walk on its own. The assassins and their masterminds want to bomb Iraq, which is rich in oil, back into a time of ethnic and religious civil war, plunge the country into chaos and decline, and demonstrate that the Shiite government under Maliki is incapable of protecting the people. The murderous events could simultaneously thwart the White House's withdrawal plans. There is much at stake for U.S. President Obama, not just for Maliki. The western superpower, which invaded Iraq six years ago as the lead nation of the coalition of the willing, cannot simply leave a nation in 2010 that is plunging into bloodshed and civil war."

Under the headline "Misery and Chaos in Iraq," Berliner Zeitung (10/27) remarked: "The counterterrorism campaign has shifted in recent months from Iraq to Afghanistan. Americans believed that this was the success of their surge strategy... and because this strategy was successful, it was to be repeated in Afghanistan. However, there were devastating attacks in Bagdad over the weekend. They did not just kill 150 people but also shocked Washington, because stability in Iraq turned out to be an illusion. Which strategy would be right to rescue the stabilization project in Afghanistan? ... The situation might have improved for the Iraqi government elite and the U.S. occupiers, who today suffer fewer and fewer casualties. However, ordinary Iraqis

barely have any electricity and clean water. Unemployment is about 50 percent. The healthcare and education system is rotten. Criminals kidnap dozens of children every day. In addition, there is an escalating level of corruption.... Social misery and chaos, the ongoing foreign occupation and selfish politicians are the reasons why the situation is instable and everything will remain as it is-in Iraq and Afghanistan."

13. (Iran) Nuclear Program

Mass-tabloid Bild (10/27) headlined "Erdogan praises the madman of Tehran" and added: "Diplomatic ice age between Israel and Turkey. In an interview with the British newspaper Guardian, Turkish PM Erdogan stood by Israel's enemy Iran and described the Holocaust denier Ahmadinejad as a 'friend.'... Erdogan also defended the Iranian nuclear program although Ahmadinejad has threatened to wipe Israel off the map."

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14. (Afghanistan) Future Strategy

Under the headline "Obama takes his time on Afghanistan," Berliner Zeitung (10/27) reported: "Obama keeps the NATO commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal waiting for the increase in troops he requested weeks ago." The paper quoted Obama as saying: "I will never rush the solemn decision of sending you into harm's way. I won't risk your lives unless it is absolutely necessary." The paper noted: "There are increasing doubts among Democrats whether the conflict can be resolved in this way," adding: "The U.S. troops in Afghanistan had a black day yesterday: eleven U.S. soldiers and three counternarcotics agents died in helicopter crashes."

15. (Environment) Climate Change

Only a few papers dealt with the upcoming UN climate summit in Copenhagen. Handelsblatt (10/27) reported on the problems new German environment Minister Norbert Röttgen is faced with under the headline: "At the Beginning of his Term, Röttgen must climb a Summit," while Frankfurter Rundschau (10/27) dealt with reports that President Obama might not attend the Copenhagen summit. The daily reported under the headline: "The Hesitant Climate Protector," and wrote under the sub-title: "The U.S. President Does not have Great Hopes of a Trip to Denmark," and added that "Barack Obama does not have good memories of Copenhagen. His last trip to the Danish capital...turned into a total embarrassment. Obama has good reason to think twice about another trip to Copenhagen. Obama was criticized for winning the Nobel Peace Prize and for being a big mouth, not able to match his words with deeds. His speech at the UN summit could intensify this impression and continue to weaken his position at home. Despite Obama's election campaign promise that the United States would assume a leading role in the fight for climate protection, his bill on the reduction of

carbon dioxide emissions is still far from being ratified by Congress. The arguments are demonstrating the deep ideological trenches that tear apart the United States and that make Obama's work so tough."

Tagesspiegel (10/27) carried an editorial, saying: "The President has certainly more pleasant things to do than coming empty-handed, leaving empty-handed, and being pilloried in between because the United States does not want to make its hoped-for contribution. He will furthermore have to withstand the Republican volleys of abuse as to why he flew to Copenhagen instead of taking care of his country. But there is one

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argument that speaks against his absence: "Those who want to lead the world must show up."

16. (UN) Karadzic Trial

In a lengthy editorial, Sddeutsche (10/27) remarked: "This probably last large-scale trial for war crimes in the Balkans is once more about the complex historical dimension of the war and its suspect.

The goal of the trial is to prove that Karadzic was the mastermind of the bloodshed and that he agreed with others to ethnic cleansing and implemented the plan. The atrocities and the complexity of the wars in Bosnia are once more to be documented to prevent the falsification of history and myth-making so common in the Balkans. This trial is asking for a lot of patience from the victims, who have been waiting for this trial for a long time. They will have to accept Karadzic's dodging to thwart the timetable - as seen right at the opening of the trial. This rogue will not confess or show remorse..... Victims will find consolation only in the fact that Karadzic's name will be cursed in history."

17. (Germany) Murder Trial Against Man Who Stabbed Muslim Woman

Many papers carry reports on the opening of a trial of a Russian-born German who stabbed a Muslim woman in a courtroom in Dresden. Tagesspiegel (10/27) headlined: "Prosecutor: Murder of Egyptian Woman out of 'Pure Hatred.'" Sueddeutsche (10/27) headlined: "Pure Hatred," and reported that "never before has the regional court in Dresden seen such tough security measures as during this trial. There are tough controls and even the lawyers of the accused must accept to be frisked. Whether the presiding judge likes to it or not, this case is a special political affair. The Egyptian ambassador to Germany is attending the opening of the trial but also the head of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Ayub KQhler.

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (10/27) judged: "We can only be surprised by the

political sensation which this trial and this crime have caused.
The
chancellor has apologized and even the Egyptian ambassador is
observing the trial. But we would do well to remember that
previously
an asylum seeker from Ghana burned in a police cell in Dessau and no
ambassador attended the trial and the responsible police director
did
not even apologize. Why are we only now beginning to ponder the
public
reaction to xenophobic crimes in this country? The regional Court
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in Dresden is trying a man of whom we do not know anything. He
alone
will stand trial, not the Federal Republic of Germany."

Under the headline: "Law Instead of Revenge," Die Welt (10/27)
argued
on its front- page: "The killing of Marwa el-Sherbini was assessed
as
evidence of racism and hostility towards Islam in Germany. That is
why the opening of the trial has met with the corresponding
reactions...but the court was well-advised to point out that it
cannot
and will not meet all expectations. In the courtroom in Dresden,
the
issue is not a political trial but criminal proceedings. It is
necessary to clearly separate these two spheres. It is not a matter
for the judges to determine whether there is a growing Islamophobia
in
the western world. They have to put together the pieces of the
crime
and sentence the perpetrator. The yardstick for the verdict should
not be based on calls from politicians and Muslim lobbyists from
Egypt, Iran or Germany for tougher sentences. And the yardstick
should by no means be based on the calls for revenge from preachers
of
hatred; the yardstick is German law and thus far it has mastered all
challenges."

Regional daily Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten (10/27) editorialized:
"The case of Marwa el-Sherbini cannot be considered a normal case.

The circumstances of the killing of the Egyptian woman are
shocking...but the Marwa trial cannot be considered a normal trial
because parts of the Muslim community are turning it into a
settlement
of old accounts [with the West] because of the West's alleged
suppression of Muslims. But those who are arguing in this way are
not
interested in a trial that is based on the rule of law.... They
want a
show trial for their own interests and they have made their judgment
in a phase of unhallowed anger long ago."

Neue Presse of Hannover (10/27) had this to say: "The responsibility
of all sides involved is great, because the issue is also to restore
confidence in German justice authorities. This confidence has also
suffered because a police officer considered an injured Egyptian to
be
the perpetrator and fired at an innocent man. The basis for the
verdict must remain German criminal law. Irrespective of calls from
politicians and [Muslim] organizations for tougher sentences, the
fact

remains that the trial is widely observed, but not a political trial."

Regional daily SchwQbische Zeitung of Leutkirch (10/27) editorialized:

"A fanatic individual perpetrator does not represent German society."

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His victim is not the victim of an Islam-hostile world. And the rule of law will treat this man as it has other murderers. The rule of law is a civilizing achievement, and in this respect, the majority of Islamic countries still have a long way to go."

Regional daily SQchsische Zeitung of Dresden opined; "The verdict, whatever it will be, cannot be considered evidence in favor or against xenophobia in Germany. The verdict will be based on the repulsive crime and xenophobic motives of the individual who must personally be held accountable."

18. (Germany) New Coalition Agreement

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (10/27) had this to say: "We do not fault the three party leaders Merkel, Westerwelle, and Seehofer for

their delight at the almost unanimous approval by their party congresses of the coalition agreement. But measured against previous German history, the real sensation in the course of the formation of this new government is not attracting any attention: Angela Merkel

has achieved something no one else has ever achieved: she is the first chancellor to change coalition partners without jeopardizing her job but apparently she has even strengthened her position.

In another editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine (10/27) dealt with the government's future tax policy and argued: "The new coalition government is reducing the [tax] burden on those people who already pay the least taxes: low income groups and families. But political calculations are impeding the things that are actually necessary. As international comparisons have demonstrated, the German state treats

parents relatively well, but the situation for singles is totally different. They are squeezed out like no other group. This is true for the average income group and particularly for those who earn more than that. This group is being taken hostage for the banking crisis. The CDU/CSU and the FDP are making no move to address this problem.

If this coalition is speaking of a reduction of the tax burden for top performers, then it is thinking of someone else. For Germans who are especially squeezed out by the state, there is a mounting stimulus to emigrate or to reduce spending. And this is something no one wants."

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung (10/27), "the tax system should be revised and reorganized. But all previous governments have lacked two things, and the new government is no exception: courage and money."

These are essentials because a reform that deserves its name will also result in less revenue for the state. And a simplification of the tax system means cutting benefits for many groups, irrespective of whether they are employees or employers. But such cuts result in a lot of trouble. That is why the dream of a simpler tax system will remain

one thing: a dream, no more."

Financial Times Deutschland (10/27) opined: "A coalition agreement that offers more than a rough direction for the coming four years, looks different than expected. Instead we get the impression that the CDU/CSU and FDP negotiators have merely written down what will allow

the public to view them as positively as possible. Of course, a coalition agreement cannot be a detailed script for the coming four years. The weak point of the coalition agreement is something else:

if even the central aspects can be interpreted differently and if all projects are put under the proviso that enough money is available, then both sides could have spared themselves the negotiations."

According to die tageszeitung (10/27), "Never before has a new government talked a coalition agreement to death before it was even

signed. But never before has any government made such an open commitment to continue an uninhibited debt policy. Chancellor Merkel told the CDU delegates at the party congress that 'savings, savings, savings' would not open new opportunities. She could also have put it differently: debts, debts, debts."

Regional daily Westdeutsche Zeitung of Dsseldorf (10/27) observed:

"In these 130 pages of the coalition agreement, you will not find a single decision on how to make savings, not a single idea of how to reduce spending. There is no doubt that it is right to withdraw money from an economy that is standing on shaky ground. But it would also be right to give up plans to spend money on things for which the funds are not available. There is no compelling reason to reduce taxes.

Even those who treat the government with benevolence are shaking their heads. Maybe the new government will soon realize that a sound economy needs sound state finances."

MURPHY